

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-02 OPR-02 M-02 A-01 PPT-02 SCA-01

SY-04 FBIE-00 L-03 H-03 OC-06 CCO-00 OCL-00 USSS-00

SCS-03 EB-11 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00

PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 PC-04 EUR-25 PER-05

COME-00 SS-20 NSC-07 PM-07 DRC-01 /183 W

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R 190925Z JUL 74

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2852

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0613

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SWEL, ET, OTRA

SUBJECT: PROJECT CONCERN

REF: ASMARA 592

1. ADMINISTRATOR OF PROJECT CONCERN IN KEREN, DR. RAYMOND LASSERRE, CALLED AT CONSULATE JULY 17, DURING MY ABSENCE IN ADDIS, AND AGAIN ON JULY 18, TO DISCUSS SECURITY SITUATION. ON JULY 16, HE HAD RECEIVED CABLE FROM DR. ROBERT CRONK, DIRECTOR OF PROJECT CONCERN IN SAN DIEGO. HE RECEIVED A MEMO, DATED JULY 9, FROM CRONK SAME DAY. MEMO PROPOSED IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL EXPATRIATE CONCERN PERSONNEL IN KEREN, AND CONSIDERABLE REDUC-TION IN SCOPE OF PROGRAM. CABLE ORDERED IMPLEMENTATION OF PRO-POSAL. CRONK SAID DECISION BASED ON INFORMATION RECEIVED DURING BRIEFING JULY 12 BY ETHIOPIAN DESK IN DEPARTMENT.

2. LASSERRE, WHO DEPARTING IN ANY EVENT JULY 31, TAKES VIEW THAT EVACUATION EXPATRIATES, OF WHICH THERE ONLY TWO -- JUDY BENEDICT, AN AMERICAN NURSE, AND ARNE SVENSSON, A SWEDISH DOCTOR -- WOULD VERY SERIOUSLY AFFECT OPERATION GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL

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BEING RUN ON CONTRACT BASIS BY PROJECT CONCERN AT KEREN, AND LEAVE

CONCERN OPEN TO CHARGES CONTRACT VIOLATION. LASSERRE PLANS REPLY TO CRONK, INDICATING WILLINGNESS OF BENEDICT AND SVENSSON TO REMAIN UNTIL THE END OF AUGUST. HE WILL SUGGEST INSTEAD OF CANCELLATION ARRIVAL OF REPLACEMENTS, THAT ARRIVAL BE POSTPONED

FOR ONE MONTH. THIS WOULD PERMIT CONTINUING OPERATION OF HOSPITAL AND OBSERVATION OF LOCAL CONDITIONS, WITH DECISION ON CONTINUATION OF CONCERN'S INVOLVEMENT TO BE BASED ON DEVELOPMENTS.

3. HE SAID CONCERN PERSONNEL FEEL SAFE IN KEREN, HAVE ASSURANCES FROM ELF THAT THEIR SERVICES ARE VALUED, AND THAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES ALSO FEEL THEY SAFE IN KEREN. HOSPITAL SUPPLIES NUMEROUS SUB-CLINICS WITH MEDICINES, VACCINES, ETC., FOR LOCAL TREATMENT OF DISEASES, INCLUDING CHOLERA. AS CONCERN KNOWN TO BE READY TO SEND HELP ANYWHERE IT NEEDED IN AREA, ELF IS NOT LIKELY, LASSERRE BELIEVES, TO KIDNAP CONCERN PEOPLE, AS THEY HAD THE NURSES IN CHINDA.

4. IN RESPONSE TO LASSERRE'S REQUEST FOR ADVICE, PRIOR TO HIS REPLY TO CRONK, I TOLD HIM WE HAD NO SPECIAL INFORMATION THAT WOULD INDICATE HIS PEOPLE IN ANY GREATER DANGER THAN ANYONE ELSE IN ERITREA OUTSIDE ASMARA. I TOLD HIM WE HAD PROHIBITED ROAD TRAVEL OUTSIDE ASMARA FOR OFFICIAL AMERICANS, AND STRONGLY DISCOURAGED PRIVATE CITIZENS FROM TRAVELLING BY ROAD, BOTH TO AVOID POSSIBLE PHYSICAL HARM (MINED ROADS, ETC.), AND TO AVOID KIDNAPPING, WITH ALL ITS POLITICAL OVERTONES. LASSERRE HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE DANGERS OF ROAD TRAVEL AFTER THE GHINDA INCIDENT.

5. LASSERRE STATED THAT CONCERN PERSONNEL DO NOT LEAVE THEIR COMPOUND AT NIGHT, AND ARE RESTRICTING THEIR ACTIVITIES TO KEREN ITSELF. IN VIEW OF THIS, AND BECAUSE THEY APPEAR TO HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THEY ARE WELCOME IN THEIR AREA, I TOLD LASERRE THAT I COULD NOT READILY OBJECT TO HIS PROPOSED REPLY TO CRONK, THAT FINAL ACTION BE DEFERRED FOR A MONTH, WITH PRESENT PERSONNEL REMAINING IN PLACE TO PERMIT AN INFORMED DECISION ON WHETHER TO CONTINUE. ABRUPT WITHDRAWAL OF EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL AND PHASING-DOWN OF PROJECT CONCERN, IN WAKE OF PROJECT HOPE'S WITHDRAWAL, COULD PRODUCE ADDITIONAL ADVERSE REACTION. AS WE NOT, AS YET, COUNSELLING EVACUATION US NATIONALS, AND IN ABSENCE ANY IMMEDIATE

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DIRECT THREAT TO CONCERN'S PEOPLE, I BELIEVE LASSERRE'S APPROACH REASONABLE.  
SHERRY

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## Message Attributes

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